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APOLLO 6

PRE-LAUNCH PRESS CONFERENCE

Cape Royal News Center, Cocoa Beach
John F. Kennedy Space Center
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Wednesday, April 3, 1968

3:30 P. M.

Participants

William C. Schneider, Apollo Mission Director, NASA
George M. Low, Apollo Spacecraft Manager, NASA
Clifford Charlesworth, Apollo 6 Flight Director, Manned Spacecraft Center,
NASA
Dr. Arthur Rudolph, Saturn V Program Office, Marshall Space Flight Center, NASA
Rocco A. Petrone, Apollo 6 Launch Director, Kennedy Space Center, NASA
Col. Royce Olson, USAF, Director DOD Manned Spaceflight Support Office,
Patrick AFB
Chris Kraft, Director of Flight Operations, Manned Spacecraft Center

Mr. King:

May I have your attention please? We're ready to proceed with the Apollo 6 prelaunch briefing at this time.

I'd like to cover a few logistics before we go into the actual conference here. We'll be open all night tonight. The phone number for any new arrivals who have not been with us before is 783-7781. We'll have somebody on duty all night and through the morning hours leading up to launch.

You've all been accredited. You have your badges. You have the instructions you require to find your way out to the press site at Launch Complex 39. You will be able to take your own transportation out there. There will be a guard who will direct you to the parking lot which is located right in front of the press site itself. We request that you don't go up on the mound at the press site, but bring your car into the parking lot in front.

We'll start a commentary at about 2 a.m. tomorrow morning, running about every half hour until the crowd grows a little larger. We will be giving a complete commentary later in the count. The countdown commentary will be handled from here until we clear the tower at liftoff at which time it will switch to the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston.

In addition to your own transportation we will have a bus departing here roughly on the hour, starting at midnight, with its last departure from the News Center at 5:30 a.m. tomorrow. You all might keep in mind that it's possible there could be some pretty good traffic in the area as we get close to launch time and it might behoove you all to consider leaving early enough to not get caught in traffic at the last minute.

We'll have a post-launch briefing at the press site at T plus 60 minutes. This will be followed by a second conference, a post-mission briefing, which will occur about ten hours after launch. This also will be a two-way conference, with participants from both the Kennedy Space Center and the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston.

I'd now like to introduce these gentlemen to you here, and one gentleman who is also standing by for us at the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. This will also be a two-way conference. We will first take questions from here and then switch to your colleagues in Houston so that they will also have an opportunity to ask questions.

To my right, here at KSC, Mr. George M. Low, who is Apollo Program Manager for the NASA Manned Spacecraft Center. Next, Mr. William Schneider, Office of Manned Spaceflight, NASA Headquarters -- Mr. Schneider is Apollo Mission Director. Next Rocco Petrone, who is Director of Launch Operations for the Kennedy Space Center, and Launch Director for the Apollo 6 flight. Next we have Dr. Arthur Rudolph. Dr. Rudolph is the Saturn V Program Manager from the Marshall Space Flight Center. And Colonel Royce Olson, who is Director of the Department of Defense Manned Spaceflight Support Office at Patrick Air Force Base. Also, standing by in Houston, is Mr. Cliff Charlesworth, who is the 502 Flight Director, the Apollo 6 Flight Director for this mission at MSC.

Mr. Kraft: I'd now like to turn it over to Mr. Schneider. Excuse me. I also understand, I'm sorry Chris, we also have Mr. Chris Kraft, who is Director of Flight Operations for the Manned Spacecraft Center, also standing by in Houston. Bill, would you take over please..

Mr. Schneider: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. First I'd like to apologize for the hour and a half delay. I assure you we were working and weren't just loafing.

We have just completed our final review of the spacecraft and the launch vehicle and the entire complex as well as the network and the DOD forces, and we've completed our review of the weather, and everything is at this time GO!

The weather situation, as reported to us by the ESSA people, is basically that early in the morning the weather will be much like this, as it is out here today, that is, with clear and gentle winds, with deteriorating conditions toward the afternoon, with an expected wind velocity reaching as much as a peak of 25 knots sometime later in the day.

But we are on schedule and moving out for an 0700 launch tomorrow morning, that's 0700 Eastern Standard.

The close of the window for tomorrow will be dependent upon the conditions in the recovery zone. We have set a requirement that the conditions in the recovery zone be such that the onsite commander can give us reasonable assurance that he will be able to successfully recover the spacecraft. We expect the close of that window to be, if conditions are very good, on the order of noon or 1230 EST.

This is, of course, the final qualification flight on the Saturn V launch vehicle, since we have previously qualified the command and service modules and the lunar module for manned flight in previous missions. We are looking forward to having a good launch vehicle flight, and as a matter of fact, a good spacecraft flight, too, George, but as I said, the spacecraft objectives are on this mission, secondary. It is even conceivable that, and I stress the word conceivable, that the mission may have accomplished all of its primary mission objectives at the time of insertion into orbit, although, of course, that couldn't be determined for quite a long time.

We do have one, I shall not call it a dark cloud, but one question mark, and this is the question that kept us out at the Launch Control Center for the past couple hours. That is the question of a temperature that we experienced during the Countdown Demonstration Test on the S-II stage J-2 engines where some of the propellant pump discharge temperatures were a few degrees above what we call our redline values, that is the values that we expect to achieve for launch.

We have taken some corrective action and we have examined it. We think we've solved the problem. We have reasonable hope that we've solved the problem. However, there is no way to test whether we will achieve the proper redline without going through a cryogenic test and so the cryogenic test is going to be in the morning.

If, for example, we do not achieve this proper temperature on the first cycle we will be forced to do what we did during the CDDT, and that is, namely, cut off, stop at about 22 seconds or thereabouts and recycle back to about 24 minutes, then wait and assess the problem and see whether or not we can stabilize conditions again, and try again. Hopefully that will not happen, but it is a very distinct possibility.

With that, I'd like to turn it over to Rocco and ask Col. Petrone if he would now give us a discussion of how things have been going out at the Cape.

Mr. Petrone:

Well, we have been busy, as you know. We finished our Countdown Demonstration Sunday, then we had to recycle for the count and also work our way through some of the things we found in the Countdown Demonstration, but we succeeded in picking up the count at one o'clock this morning. We have a final 24-hour terminal count which we picked up at one, and at the time we left there -- as of now, I understand -- the count is on schedule. We plan a hold at the eight-hour mark, T minus eight hours. We plan a hold of six hours. We have no scheduled work and at this time it does not appear that there will be any necessary within that hold. We are on schedule with all of our checks, everything is going fine. So, roughly at 1700, in another hour and fifteen minutes, we will complete our task on schedule. We will have a six-hour hold and pick up again at 11 o'clock tonight for the final portion of the count of eight hours to a seven o'clock liftoff.

At 10:30 p.m. we will have a look at the weather to see if the situation has changed. Right now, the forecast would indicate that our morning time is the best time to go, that is Thursday morning. We will take a look at the weather at 10:30, then commit at 11:00 p.m., that is EST, at T minus eight in our count for the launch. At T minus seven hours we start our cryogenic tanking and shortly thereafter we will start getting cryogenics into the stage. Up until T minus eight hours we can sit there and recycle on a 24-hour basis. If we decide not to pick up the count at 11:00, and assuming we had no problem causing us to go in and change something, we could sit there and hold. We can do that through Saturday as we now see it. We could wait through Thursday, Friday and Saturday on our launch attempts, assuming for some reason at T minus eight hours we do not want to pick up the count, other than for hardware difficulties somewhere in the program.

Once we get our cryogenics aboard the stage we then are in the position of a 72-hour recycle. These are my conclusions on where we have been and what we have been doing since our CDDT ended, and now we expect to pick up the count at 11:00 p.m. for a launch at 7:00 a.m.

Col. Olson:

Department of Defense support for this mission is essentially the same as it was for Apollo 4 -- 501. We have roughly 45 aircraft and 11 ships involved. We are taking advantage of this unmanned mission, of course, to further train our crews and check out the equipment on the new resources that are coming into the

inventory to support Apollo, such as the Apollo ships and the ARIA aircraft. There will be two aircraft in the Hawaiian area for reentry, there will be three of them out here in the Atlantic. There are three Apollo ships involved. One of them, the Mercury, is sitting out here in the port, but we are getting training as the spacecraft passes over, so if you're interested in Apollo ships, there is one right here at the port.

Question: I'd like a recap on the postponements, the seriousness of them, etc., from March 21. There have been five postponements, is that correct?

Mr. Schneider: I don't know the numbers. We did start out for March 21. We did have a number of minor problems, normal problems. Perhaps Rocco would like to go into them.

Mr. Petrone: Those of us working in the program, doing the job day by day, perhaps don't see much of the calendar shifts -- there are shifts throughout our schedule. I can't think of anything -- you see, in the CDDT we did have three attempts. On one attempt we had a leak in the facility, that we had to repair. On a second attempt we had fuel difficulties. So it was those kind of problems that went on and moved us from the 21st to the 4th -- throughout our preparation schedule. I can't recall a single large item that we changed out. There was additive work, things took a little longer and on some of our tasks, either we didn't hit it the first time or had to go back in and change a component, but there was nothing significantly large that gave us a two week slip by itself. There were many additive situations.

Question: I'd like to ask George Low if all the objectives of the spacecraft are regarded as secondary as far as he is concerned, is there anything that could happen to the spacecraft, including washout or failure to recover, that might make you want to have another preparatory flight before manned flight?

Mr. Low: Well, I have to say yes to that question, but I can't give you a more specific answer. If we should lose a spacecraft because of a spacecraft failure, we would have to look at that failure to determine whether we would need another flight or can solve it by ground test or analysis or what have you. These questions are very difficult to answer before a flight, but come very easy after a flight.

